

The Art of Aino Kallas

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ONCE again I return to Estonia, that strange, sea-girt country in which I have been deeply interested for many years.

To-night I shall essay an appreciation of the work of an authoress, who, though a native of another, but related country, has chosen for the theme and background of her creations the country of her husband and the land of her adoption.

Madam Aino Julia Maria Kallas is the daughter of the late Julius Krohn, an eminent professor of the University of Helsinki, and therefore by birth a Finn: but in 1900 she married Dr. Oskar Kallas, a distinguished Estonian scholar—philologist and folklorist—and one of the leaders in the national movement. After the independence he became the Minister of the little republic to Finland, and later was transferred to England, where he had a long diplomatic life, from which he retired in recent years. Madam Kallas shared this official life, and her literary work was done during vacations in Estonia in a summer bungalow on the island of Kassar on the western coast of the country.

That is all that is necessary to know about the authoress in the way of biographical details; but to comprehend fully the significance of her fine work, some knowledge of Estonia and its people is essential. I have given some glimpses of this before, but will now call attention only to facts relevant to an understanding of her writings.

Estonia, though politically not yet twenty years old, has a sad history from the twelfth century. The Estonians came to the Baltic about 500 B.C. and

pursued a pastoral and maritime life for years. About the twelfth century, however, they became the prey of the Western nations—first the German Knights of the Sword and then Danes, Poles and the kindlier Swedes. Finally, until the Great War, these peasant people of Finnish stock were governed by a German—Balt aristocracy under Russian rule. Though they were long in serfdom and suffered with resignation the oppressive rule of their overlords, they never lost national consciousness, for, as Lydia Koidula puts it, “a secret hope” lingered among them. The national movement fostered by folk-song and folk-lore, and the cultivation of the native tongue in the homes grew bolder and bolder. The World War came, and with it the great opportunity. These little singing folk, after heroic fighting, became an independent people. The history of Estonia is, in fact, a political Cinderella tale.

But, further, the romantic reconstruction in the country is heartening. The new republic began, at the first tinge of dawn, to repair the walls of its ruined home, and to plough its weeded fields, as a native historian aptly puts it. Estonia put her house in order with imaginative realism and characteristic sobriety. Moreover, a Young Estonia movement arose with the sane slogan “We must not only be Estonians, but good Europeans as well”. To-day the little land is progressing and developing its slender resources, and is one of the sturdiest small states created by the travail of the War.

Madam Kallas has treated chiefly, but not exclusively, the sad history of the past. She has, of course, used the stage of the Estonian scene as well—the broad Northern plain with the quaint mediæval city of Tallinn; the undulated South with the smaller towns of Parnu, Tartu and Viljandi in ancient Livonia; and most of all the more primitive islands of the West, that legend-haunted fringe the shores of her adopted

country. Lonely marsh and lake; groves of almost perpendicular trees; sandy moors and stony islands; Estonia in the grip of the snows of winter, and in the amazing rapidity of spring; log-cabin and mediæval castle; simple but picturesque peasant; Baltic baron and burgher—all these are in her works.

But however distinguished may be a writer's powers of scenic and historic description, they will not atone for a lack of characterisation. Madam Kallas has, in addition to descriptive skill, the capacity to depict the soul of a people.

The Estonians are a peasant folk belonging to the tough Finnish race, and they have been schooled in toil and suffering. This makes their outlook practical and realistic from one standpoint; but there is a dual nature in them also. Slow and phlegmatic in one sense, they are active and industrious in another. Calm and even obstinate at one time, they are brave and heroic in pursuit of a worthy cause. Passivity and activity; resignation and anger; coolness and enthusiasm; practical wisdom and poetic idealism exist side by side. Their wagon runs upon the solid ground, but it is hitched also to a star.

The wealth of folk-lore is unequalled in Europe. They kept their souls by singing during the suffocating centuries; and though they are Lutheran Christians, there still lingers among them, especially in the more primitive places in the west, something of that Shamanism which is typically Finnish. Legend-lore is rich and the belief in the werewolf, the witch and the demon, the endowment of inanimate nature with life—all these are found in it. The magic that pervades the *Kalevala* and to some extent the Estonian poem, the *Kalevipoeg*, is the root from which grow many artistic creations in modern times. Madame Kallas has used with great effect these sources of national inspiration.

Her works can be classified into essays, stories, and

plays, and as the first-named are of restricted interest, I will only refer to them briefly.

Nuori Viro is the Finnish equivalent of *Noor Eesti*, and consists of a series of critical essays on the chief features and figures in the epoch-making "Young Estonia" movement. Led by the poet Gustav Suits, the novelist Friedebert Tuglas, the painter Kristian Raud and others, it was a movement to discipline the expression of Estonian culture in all its forms, and bring it nearer to the level of the great European standards.

Dr. Oras has called these critiques penetrating, graphic, adequate, and, as the writer is a naturalised author of Finnish birth, especially valuable for their impartial detachment. One essay entitled *The Garden of the Myth* dealing with Tuglas can be read in the omnibus volume *Great Essays of the Nations*.

Another important book was a biography—the life of Lydia Koidula. Lydia Jannsen (that was her real name) was the poetess who sang the hopes of the Estonian nation in the days of the awakening before the War. She married a Latvian physician and went to live in Cronstadt, dying at the early age of 43. In her exile her yearning for the land she loved was intense, and she suffered much unhappiness. Lydia's *nom de plume* may, perhaps, be translated as "Lydia of the Dawn," and Madame Kallas has given to her admirable biography a poetic title, expressive of the personal tragedy in the life of the poetess.

From the pen of our authoress has also come a striking travel book on Morocco.

The White Ship was the first volume of the work of Aino Kallas to appear in English, and consists of seventeen arresting stories. I can only speak of a representative few.

The title tale comes last and is the pathetic description of the religious sect, who followed the Prophet

Maltsvet, whom they regarded as another John the Baptist. He had persuaded many people that a deliverer would come in a white vessel, and carry them to a Promised Land. They set out for the Lasnamagi meadows on the Tallinn seashore to await it, and the disillusionment is poignantly depicted by Madame Kallas.

The first story is designated a legend, and relates how Odele, the wife of the Councillor of the Leper Hospital in Tallinn, gave a rose from the hand of her child to a leper, who begged it from her. Fascinated by his unusual request, she threw it to him, and his diseased body changed into its pristine youthful beauty, as in a vision. It is an exquisite and colourful piece of work, creating the impression that one has been gazing on a stained glass window, or turning the illuminated leaf of a mediæval manuscript. Here I will interpose the closing passage as an example of the quality of the writing:—

The bees hummed in the garden, all else was silence, and then the leper replied:

"Woman, there was a time when I desired all that was pleasant on the earth. No joy was there but my sense had revelled in it. I have filled my brain with all the learning of our time, I have borne armour as a soldier; women have heaped on me their love, from princess to scullery maid. All that is past, the curse of God weighs heavily on me, and all I desire is the rose in the hand of thy child. Not even thee, Odele, do I desire, though with these dim eyes I see the delight of thy body and the great gentleness of thy heart. But be merciful, give to the dying *what no other man desires.*"

"Peace be with thee, Odele, daughter of Valdemar, wife of Jurgen Schutte," broke in the old barefooted man. "Fulfil, my daughter, the prayer of the Lord's accursed, show mercy and give him the unneeded rose. The Death Mass was read for him to-day in Church, as is done for lepers, the joiner has prepared his coffin, he is no longer of the living. Be therefore righteous, give to him, as thou wouldst give to the dead."

And Odele, remembering her prayer to the Virgin Mary and overcoming at last the coldness of her heart, grasped the hand of her child and with it cast the rose to the leper.

And lo! she saw as it were a vision.

The taint of the diseased standing there before her fell off like large white scales. The gaping sores they left joined up without a scar, in place of the lost fingers, joint by joint new ones appeared, ulcers grew smooth and were seen no more, the dim eyes regained their lustre, the skin its clear freshness, the eyebrows their curve, the body its brave and gallant bearing.

She saw that the man she had looked upon as a leper was of the race of brave and splendid humanity, the heart of the Creator had beat high at his birth, the stars had danced a golden measure at his coming into the world.

And Odele, the young wife of Jurgen Schutte, Councillor of the town of Tallinn, and Head of the Hospital of St. John, come from afar, from the land of green beech-woods, fled hurriedly into the garden, confusion and a strange languor in her heart, in her hair a golden bee drunk with honey and ready to sting.

Then there is the story entitled *The Vicar and the Parish Clerk*. The plot is slight, but it is a masterly piece of psychology. The Vicar is the symbol of the possessive and contemptuous Baltic-German, and in the Parish Clerk we view the soul of the Estonian "tough, strong, with a kind of elasticity that lifts it from its lowly station, that can never be crushed to the earth, that knows how to be silent and abide its time".

There is also a dramatic tale of a bride ordered to the manor on her wedding night, who receives from her husband a knife to protect her virginity, and the knowledge that only under the gleam of a convict's hut in Siberia will they be united.

Two masterpieces demand more than a passing reference.

Gerdruta Carponai begins with a vivid picture of the coming of the Black Death to Saaremaa. Gerdruta was a high-born maiden who alone remained after the plague had slain (as she believed) every living soul on one part of the island. She fled before her own loneliness until, like Crusoe, she saw a human footprint on the sand.

Wandering on, she espied a young peasant in coarse, hempen robe who gave her to eat and asked laconically

"All dead?" "Dead! every one," replied Gerdruta. "Here, too!" said the man with that tense brevity that distinguishes the North.

Later, it dawned upon them that they were the only beings left. There were no longer slaves or free, German or peasant, class or station. All that man had built up during the centuries had gone. That evening the high-born Gerdruta Carponai became the unwedded wife of Laes the fisherman, "horror of death mingling with the yearning for life of generations yet to come".

In the epilogue comes the basis of truth on which this and other tales is built. The church registers record that her five sons were baptized later, and she was placed on the penitent form for immodest women, and after penance and absolution, was again received into the church and legally married. They were the progenitors of a race of fishers and peasants and high-born Gerdruta disappeared as a stone in a bog in the low caste of her husband. But in the words of the original "She had lived through a world hidden since the days of Paradise from men: a world without grades of value, without caste or class, without the many-coloured tinsels of man's devising, a world with two lovers dwelling in it alone".

The other masterpiece is a tragic story called *The Sacrifice*. Andres, a fisherman, was infected with leprosy, and so, with sorrowful reluctance, the men of the village put this decision before him.

We are altogether about forty souls counting children, and thou art one. Is it not more fit that one be sacrificed than that a whole people be destroyed? We will not destroy thee, but provide thee with food and drink until thy death. But that thou mayest not infect us all, we shall confine thee in Reinu Kaarel's old stable, and we believe thee to be willing?

He was.

The poignant final scene is described with masterly simplicity thus:

"Quickly! quickly!" Reinu Kaarel urged the old fishermen. Each grasped Andres by a shoulder and began pushing him towards the open door of the stable. As though gathering all his strength, Andres shook them from him with one movement of his shoulders, stepping by his own accord through the doorway, without another glance behind him. His tear-stained son was within, but was hauled out. Then Reinu Kaarel locked the door with the great padlock, placing the key in his pocket.

They all stood with bared heads as at a sacred ceremony in ancient pagan groves, and the voice of Teiste Mari was uplifted in a funeral hymn, and they sang through its seven verses from beginning to end, a slow, long-drawn dirge, before the locked stable.

The second book of Madam Kallas to appear in English is called *Eros the Slayer*. It comprises two tales—one short, and the other extending almost to the length of a novel. They are both love stories, and have a poignancy rarely equalled in literature.

The first concerns the young damsel Barbara von Tisenhusen, and is a feudal tale of a tragic love in Livonia during the reign of the Teutonic Knights. Barbara is a beautiful and gentle maiden, whose character is unlike the stern and arrogant members of the lordly house to which she belongs. She sympathises with the poor peasants, and is indifferent to the splendours of the Teutonic order. A scrivener and travelling merchant—one Franz Bonnius—comes from Germany, and to this noble young man she gives her love. They elope from the country, but Barbara is captured, tried, and condemned according to the Law of Parnu. With their own hands her brothers thrust her through a crack in the ice of the Virts Lake. Bonnius becomes filled with a spirit of vengeance and obtains the aid of Poland. The lordly race to which Barbara belongs dies out.

This pitiful tale is sorrowfully told by the Vicar of Rannu, and in the language of a pietist, which invests it with just the atmosphere of mediæval religion that it needs.

The second story is called *The Rector of Reigi*, and is the Job-like life of a priest who lived on the island of Hiiumaa (Dago) in the West of Estonia.

This huge man with his lively disposition, instead of adopting a soldier's life followed his father, and became a preceptor and priest. He came to Tallinn as Rector of the Episcopal School and prosperity followed. He married a beautiful wife, and life was happy and his position increasingly affluent.

The impertinence of a wealthy pupil, however, brought the train of misfortune. He lost his temper, and in chastising this recalcitrant scholar, accidentally caused his death. He was tried and acquitted, but lost his employment, although innocent, for suspicion, fostered by an enemy, rested upon him. Privation and domestic unhappiness followed; but at last he was appointed to the ramshackle rectory of Reigi in the remote western island of Hiiumaa.

Here the suspected murderer had to work, and tried to find peace. But calamity came again, for his wife became dissatisfied with the drab and arduous life in this primitive place. The eternal triangle appeared in the person of an attractive assistant priest who was appointed to help him, and lodged in his rectory.

Catherine and this youthful lover went away together, and the vengeance of the husband became hellish in its intensity. She was caught, tried, and put to death in Tallinn. When the priest saw her going to execution an agony of remorse seized him, and he suffered as with bloody sweat, till forgiveness even for her, brought healing and comparative peace to his soul.

It is an intense, poignant, personal confession of the teller's life story, and in a deeply religious vein. Apart from this, the conditions of life on the island of Hiiumaa are revealing, and finely depicted.

These two stories show the subjection of women to

masculine rule in feudal times, and we suffer with the heroines in the tragedy of the noble love of one, and the illicit passion of the other. Not without reason is the book aptly titled *Eros the Slayer*.

Friedebert Tuglas has said that there is a night side to the Estonian soul, and a graveyard imagination is often found. We glimpse it in the next book written by Madame Kallas called *The Wolf's Bride*. It is a legendary tale of the Jekyll and Hyde existence lived by a forester's wife, and springs from the wierd superstition of the island of Hiiumaa.

Aalo, the wife, was changed by Satan into a werewolf, and fled from her lawful husband into the wilds where she consorted with the wood-demon, and was called by the peasants "The Wolf's Bride". The duality of Aalo's gentle, human existence, and her life as the bride of the wolf, increases the horror and fascination of the tale. The closing scenes are very moving.

The husband finds out that she has a witch mole on her breast, and therefore a double life as wolf and woman; so he drives her from the homestead. The peasants find her in a bath-house with a newborn child, and they burn them and the house, when the forester is far away. When he returns he is smitten with sorrow and believes that her spirit roams the woods as a wolf. He sees it and tracks it, killing it with a silver bullet made from their wedding ring. He burns the carcass and prays that God in His mercy will release her entangled soul from the wolf-charm.

As in many of the tales the writer envelops the legendary material with the warnings of religion against the subtle forces of evil rampant in the earth. It is an eerie, uncanny story, and one reads this astounding re-creation of a myth as in a dream.

The book gained the Finnish State Prize, and a critic of that country says "Madame Kallas has delved with the overwhelming inspiration of the artist into

the mystery of the werwolf, and seems to be possessed by a similar demon as the Forest Spirit whose magical power penetrates the whole story."

Madame Kallas has kindly allowed me to see an unpublished story in this vein of fantasy, and it is appropriate to refer to it here. The Finnish title is *Pyhän Joen Kosto*—"The Revenge of the Holy River." It is a ballad legend and relates the story of Adam Dorffer who, viewing the waters of the Holy River, determined to harness its power and build a mill on its banks. Dire events, including his own destruction, followed.

The sacred river is endowed with mystery and terror, and healing as its waters are in tranquillity, it will brook neither filth nor fetter. The atmosphere and style of telling, which has all the characteristics of Finnish imagination, may be gauged from the following quotation:

But the river Vohandu which the peasants called the Holy River had a living soul, blown into it by the Lord God himself, even as He blew the living spirit into the nostrils of Man. And this soul was long-suffering, but dangerous in anger, fierce in its love of freedom, thirsting for the blood of its enemies, and jealous of its purity.

Even thus was the Vohandu, whose waters he was bent on taming for his service, for the grinding of corn and the sawing of timber.

Adam Dorffer, however, was an artist in mills, and he laughed at the superstitions of the peasants, and cast a dead dog into the river to show his contempt of its powers. He heeded not even the warnings of a former friend, and called the story of the river "an old wives' tale".

Returning, however, through the woods he heard a voice crying in the speech of the country folk, "Adam Dorffer, defile not the Holy River!" The spirit of the river appeared as a maiden, who scraped, with a tiny

knife, a few shreds of white silver into the waters of the stream like the shavings from the edge of the moon.

In the beautiful poetic conversation that followed she warned him of the power of the river, and prophesied that, like the dead dog he had cast into the stream, its current would one day sweep him away.

The peasants watched with mingled fear and admiration the struggle between a man and a river. At last he built the mill and his triumph was celebrated by a festival. The Holy River, however, was preparing its revenge, and soon flood and pestilence came and the common people grew restive. Adam Dorffer was defiant at first, but later told the workers that they were foolish to blame him, and that if the catastrophes did not cease he would be their ransom and the river Vohandu could take him.

The workmen were satisfied, but from that time Adam Dorffer became a changed man. He suffered in dreams, and saw the spirit of the stream again lying in the bed of the river, and rebuking him for trampling upon her. One night he saw a fire in the distance and was mystified. It came from an ancestral grove and the peasants were sacrificing a bull in it as in pagan days. The river began to exert magnetic power, and soon the people had risen and attacked the mill to destroy it and its builder. But an old elder said, "It is not for us to kill him, for he belongs to none but the Holy River which he has defiled." They therefore loosened the dam made by the bridge by the mill and threw Adam Dorffer into the flood as he had thrown the dead dog. Thus the Holy River in its revenge took him into its bosom.

It is a fascinating story with the ballad atmosphere admirably caught, and reminds one of Barrie's *Island* that wants to be visited, or the Tibetan superstition concerning Mount Everest and other legend fancies.

The work of Madame Kallas, however, includes play-writing. A short one-act play has appeared in English in a volume edited by John Bourne. It is called *Bathsheba of Saaremaa*.

In the National Museum at Tartu I saw a suitable setting for this play—a model of a poor log-cabin on the island. There are three characters, Kiugi-Simm, the manor blacksmith, old Kai his mother, and Riina his wife. Riina has been a maid at the Manor and is a young and attractive Estonian woman. She has been asking the baron to write a letter which will ensure that her husband shall not be taken as a soldier, for this will involve twenty-five years' separation from his wife and home.

In the morning she had given the blacksmith the baron's letter, and now, on the snowy evening when the curtain rises, they are awaiting his return after its delivery. The old mother observes the wife's restlessness and makes a shrewd guess at the cause. Simm returns half tipsy, and under his sheepskin coat they discover a medal which shows he has been taken. This causes hysterical grief in the old mother and terror in his wife. The jocularity of the blacksmith changes into drama, and we see that he, too, guesses the truth. He calls for the Bible, and makes Riina read the story of David and Bathsheba, which, terror-struck, she is unable to finish. He completes it, and extracts the facts that the baron had assured Riina she would be well looked after, and had seduced her. In his rage Simm throttles his wife, while the mother shrieks out that now he will be taken for ever. Recovering from his frenzy he looks on the lifeless body of his wife and sinks, broken in spirit, on a bench with the words, "Bathsheba, a poor man's ewe lamb".

This stage version—there is a pathetic and merciful climax in the other in *The White Ship*—was broadcast

in the National Programme in 1934 with Lena Ashwell in the role of the mother.

I have, moreover, been privileged to see the manuscript of a full length play in three acts, which has not yet been printed or presented in England, though it has been performed in Finland and Estonia. It is called *Maret ja hänen poikansa*—"Maret and her Son."

The first scene is in the log-cabin of a Livonian woman, who was a mother among the poor peasants in the days of their servitude under the Teutonic Knights. Her husband and six sons had died in revolts against the knightly oppressors, and she has one son left.

While she is talking with an old peasant, a messenger comes and reveals that the tithe sacks that are due to go to Viljandi Castle that night will conceal (like the wooden horse of Troy) armed men. The peasants have risen and the castle will be stormed. Like the bearer of the fiery cross, he has brought the call to her son. Maret is profoundly moved.

Her son enters; he knows all about the plot, and is determined to uphold the family tradition, and lead in the first sleigh. There is tense conflict between him and his mother, the old warrior supporting the son's decision. At last the son leaves them, and Maret is momentarily crushed. Before the curtain falls she finds a sudden resolution, and cries out, "This last one they shall never take—I have given birth to him. He is flesh of my flesh. He is mine!"

The next scene is in Viljandi Castle and opens with a comic Falstaffian episode in which a fat friar is made to drink for a wager. Then the Master of the Order comes, and soon we see the dramatic entry of Maret--the Estonian mother. She tells the Master of the plot, demanding as the price of her treachery the life of her son.

A scene in the courtyard of the castle follows. The revolt has failed, and Maret is lying by her son, who is not dead, but stunned. The Grand Master comes and tells Maret that he has fulfilled his word and spared her son's life. He offers her protection, as she cannot now return to her people. He also offers her gold, which she refuses, because she has betrayed her people only to save her son. The scattered coins lie on the courtyard when the son, Imant, awakens from his swoon. He sees them and realises the awful truth that his mother is a traitress. Overwhelmed with the disgrace of it, he rushes up the stairway and casts himself from the battlements.

The last scene is the burial of Imant. The peasants assemble for the funeral, but are unaware of the identity of the betrayer. Maret comes bowed with grief, but at last can contain herself no longer. She declares that for the sake of her son she sold her country, and has lost all. They can do what they will with her, for her life is finished. The people are dumbfounded and unbelieving at first, but soon they assail her with curses and trample her to death.

The scene closes with Maanus—the old warrior of Sakala—protecting her dead body from the fury of the mob as the winter sunset is fading over the waters of Lake Viljandi.

It is a powerful and poignant historical tragedy. In the original language, which is archaic, the mediæval atmosphere, reminiscent of Scott's novels, is admirably conveyed. The setting affords plenty of scope for the scenic artist, and the plot has incident and movement. Though the story is of foreign history, the theme of the tragic conflict between mother-love and patriotism is universal. There is a poetic dignity in the script, the characterisation is strong and emotional, and one instinctively thinks of an actress like Sybil Thorndike in the title rôle.

What, then, are the secrets of the admirable art of Aino Kallas?

In the first place one is conscious (as John Galsworthy says in praising her) of a strange dish, of a contact with primal things; and this is an attraction in itself for foreign readers. But however alluring the content of her work may be, it could not be vital and permanent if it did not possess that distinction of style which distinguishes an artist from a mere story-teller.

Critics in England, Germany, Holland, Sweden, Hungary and Italy, in all of which countries translations have appeared from the Finnish and Estonian originals, testify to the realistic force and extraordinary atmosphere of these tales.

In depicting simple and primitive people Madame Kallas is clean, simple and direct. There is, as the *Manchester Guardian* says, a bleak but effective economy of words characteristic of Northern writers. Conversations are laconic and tense, and there is a restraint that creates emotion by apparently suppressing it in the narrative, after the manner of Maupassant.

Madam Kallas is, however, not only a realist but has the endowments of a romantic poet, though in the technical sense she has written little verse. She chooses colourful and suggestive words and her prose has melody and rhythm. The concentration and juxtaposition of the words create imaginative atmosphere; and last, but not least, she has the vision that is the holiest mystery of the poet.

There is often a dream-like quality in her legendary work, and she can invest a mediæval story with the aura that it needs, or take a wild ride into the spectral might of imagination from the lore of the Estonian land. Nature and human nature in quiet moods are depicted in language that is gentle as a caress; but in sinister aspects her realism can become stark and powerful. The vision comes in her perception of the

spiritual beauty in the ugliness of fact. Everywhere it is an erudite, sensitive and artistic mind that is at work on the materials.

I do not find it easy to quote passages taken from their context, for there is a uniform distinction in the language throughout, and it is the cumulative effect that appeals, but there are a few passages that linger in my memory:

And it chanced that the weather was very calm, as though the winds had kept the Lord's Sabbath, and the sky was flecked like the breast of a thrush.

And from the beautiful tale *The Stranger*:

Silence followed. The eyes of all three swept slowly from face to face in the dusk which hid their features.

Like the needle of a talking machine bringing dumb discs to life, slowly revolves in grooves as fine as hair, the sharp needle of memory began to move in their souls, cruelly, inexorably awakening old melodies to life.

And last, from the close of the confession of the solely-tried Rector of Reigi, this passage of Biblical beauty:

But when, at last, the sands in my hour glass shall have run out and my mortal life attained its span, I firmly believe I shall die a peaceful and untroubled death. For though Satan, that Fisherman of Hell, well-nigh trapped me in the meshes of his net of anger, out I wriggled like a slippery eel, and the meshes of Satan's net are torn where I was fast.

And it is my hope that on the hands of the Holy Angels my soul will soon be borne to everlasting bliss. *Haec est navigatis nostra*—thus wandereth the ship of our life, and thus it gaineth the harbour.

The work of Madame Kallas one must confess is generally sad, though she can give us an amusing story like *The Smuggler*; but her sadness is due to the subject matter she chooses, of the days, which her husband remarked to me "are happily past".

In one of her kind letters she explains her method of creation. It is to go to Estonia and concentrate in solitude and isolation. No visitors! No tourists! This

from diplomatic days has had to be in the summer, and the habit persists.

"I seem to fall into a winter sleep like the bears or flies," she explains. "I am now concentrating on plays, and it is my highest wish that some may be performed in England."

May that be so! In any case I am certain that from that quiet villa in Kassar has come some of the most individual and arresting ~~work~~ in the modern literature of the North.